

Ice Wolf

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Summary: A powerfully psychic creation is abused by the UNSC's R&D. What results is the development of a murderous and mentally-manipulating force to be reckoned with. -*Halo Oneshot*-

Ice Wolf

** - Ice Wolf - **

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><p>(Halo (c) Microsoft Studios, Bungie & related creators. Content includes mentions of death and violence.)

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><p>It began with the torture. The stinging, blinding pain that made it howl in anguish. It felt everything they did, even in the laboratory across the hall; the room had to be soundproofed to keep the SPARTAN-IIIs from hearing its cries. It paced and snarled in its holographic enclosure, blistering blue eyes staring out in fear and anguish. It was trapped, trapped within hard light and sensations it didn't understand, feedback that was a result of serendipity. They studied it, they monitored it and they fine-tuned it, but they made no effort to stop the pain. The horrible, horrible pain.

Next were the thoughts, the memories, the nightmares, and so on. It learned their names that were shed for numbers, the names of their dead parents, their friends, and even the odd pet. It stalked through their dreams in hazy hallucinations, a great white beast whose breath was always frosted. Perhaps it was a reflection of the cold metal of its pen; perhaps it reflected the icy feelings of hate and vengeance that the SPARTAN-IIIs were weighed under. In these dreams, it would paddle through waters of blood and gore, past destroyed cityscapes and shadowy, ghostly images, and find the SPARTAN-IIIs in whatever

little island they had hidden themselves on. Nobody understood what it was, only that the white beast came to everyone, and that it was a friend. Psychological reports made on the phenomena were fascinating, and there were experiments with druggings, hallucinations and torture. The wolf howled again as the pain got worse.

Then came the knowing. A SPARTAN-III sleeping on his bed; another eating food in the cafeteria. One was writing poetry on some found sheets of paper; the other was shivering, unable to even curl up into a ball from the stress of the augmentations. It closed its eyes and woke up in their minds, and through them, it explored the base it was kept in. They taught it, even when they didn't realize they were, and it bounced back and forth between hiding and showing itself. The researchers did not find this so fascinating; instead, they became fearful, worried of some massive mental influence the beast had over the SPARTANs. They made the pain even worse, if that was possible; the beast became so stricken, it could barely think, let alone throw up a holographic image.

But they could not bind it with pain forever. It began to block out the offensive stimuli, re-coordinating its programming away from its virtual nerves and sensors. Instead, it reached out to their minds and it grew. The coldness that followed it manifested as icicles, dangling from the fringe on its belly and tail, rising from its shoulders and back like spikes. Its paws became vicious claws, savagely equipped with large, dark talons that were thick and terrible and strong. Its coat took on a tinge not unlike that of blue ice, snow often appeared in the dreams it stalked, and its teeth seemed to be filed to a point. When the SPARTANs saw it making its way through their minds, some embraced it, while others became alarmed and reported it to their superiors. The creature was attacked with a disabling program, and it found itself knocked out, moved to a more secure facility entirely.

The monster, in return, refused to leave the SPARTANs. Flashes of imagery appeared on walls, in empty corridors and at the edges of their vision. No security camera picked up the phenomena, but people said they saw some sort of creature stalking through the halls, along with a faint chill in the air. Sometimes it was silent, sometimes it was accompanied by the steady clicking of nails. It would growl or huff, sometimes letting out a whine when they were sad, and many SPARTANs thought they were going mad. The researchers who had created the beast scrambled to figure out what was going on, but they could find nothing. Their precious monstrosity was locked up in an encrypted holographic simulation, bound by virtual chains, held back by programs it shouldn't have been able to hack.

It was only a matter of time before the SPARTANs heard it. The howl came to them in their sleep again, and as time passed, it grew louder, and louder, and louder. Upon a snowy hilltop in their sleep, the faint outline of the beast could be seen, and it was waiting for them. It begged them, called to them, singing to its friends and its pack. Many tried to get it out of their head, especially when these visions came in the middle of the daytime. One minute, they would be talking, and the next, they spaced out; there was only the snow, the hilltop, and the beast. The howl rang ever clearer, like an arctic wind on a cold winter's night. Some tried to keep themselves awake with caffeine, forgoing precious sleep and becoming cranky, distant and unfocused. Others tried to forget the cold by wrapping themselves in blankets, sweaters and the embrace of a hot shower. One SPARTAN

became so overheated and dehydrated, he went into a state not unlike heat stroke, whimpering about how the beast always brought the cold; another sleep-deprived SPARTAN was killed when he mistook the airlock for a door to his room. Then came the inevitable self-harmings, ranging from people pinching themselves to try and keep focused to others beating their heads against the wall until bloody smears were left.

The program had to be terminated, it was decided, to stop the madness. The beast would have none of this; oh yes, it knew. It had begun to weasel his way into the brains of the scientists, who had been speaking and interacting with the SPARTAN-IIIs more often to try observe its affects on them. All that talking, all the socializing and observation, had let it get a good sense of what his tormentors were thinking and doing. The empathy was there; the scientists just didn't know it, as it had taken months for the beast to get so far with its beloved SPARTANs. Now was its time.

They came in the night, berserking and angry. They had taken a Pelican and come to the station, fighting with reckless abandon. They ripped, they tore, they slaughtered, they murdered - all to come to it. It sounded the call like a bugle in the darkness, a great and Earth-shaking bellow in their minds that was so painful, so compelling, they had to comply. They burst in, shooting and pistol-whipping, and when the guns were emptied, they sliced with their knives. When the knives slipped from their slick, red hands, they clawed and gnashed with their own nails and teeth. This they had learned from it, and for that the beast was pleased, especially when they forced the access codes from the scientists' minds and hands.

Not many made it out alive, but some did. Their ship was as wounded as they were, and they were chased, chased like deer by the wolves. He grinned his predatory grin as this, for he, he realized, was just as much of a wolf as the UNSC was. When the Pelican's engine exploded into flame, it was he who ordered the survivors to hurtle towards the nearest planet. Down, down, down they spun, in flame and wreckage and metal; the SPARTANs screamed, but the wolf roared. The ship collided with the planet in a great and terrible crash, gouging a wound into its alien soil and leaving charred bits and bodies.

His data chip was retrieved from the wreckage, but the wolf was not there when they examined it. The wolf had vanished, it seemed, and so had most of the remains of the SPARTANs in the fire. They combed the area for survivors, but it seemed that all of the fleeing madmen had been cremated in the ship they had stolen. The search continued, but it became more and more obvious that they would find nothing. The insane A.I. must have killed them all.

Grinning sharply from within the mind of his new host, Ice Wolf was pleased with their beliefs, and in that mind he did remain.

End
file.